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POTENTIAL 4-H MEMBERSHIP

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Two major trends in the population of the United States are affecting potential membership in 4-H Clubs. One trend is the shift from a predominantly rural-farm population to a predominantly urban population. In 1790, 95 percent of our population lived in rural areas (both farm and nonfarm); in 1950, the comparable figure was 41 percent. In 1910, the earliest date for which we have an estimate of the farm population, 35 percent of our population lived on farms; in 1950, only 16 percent of our population lived on farms. Furthermore, it is likely that this long-time decrease in the farm population will continue despite a probably increasing total population, and that the farm population may constitute only about 13 percent of the total in 1960.

The second trend is the rise in the birth rate, which began somewhat mildly with small but rather consistent increases between 1936 and 1942; reached a decided peak in the latter part of 1942, just about 10 months after Pearl Harbor; and receded only to rise to higher peaks in the postwar period. Slightly more than 3 million persons, born during that first peak in the birth rate in 1942-43, will reach their tenth birthdays in the next 12 months and will become eligible for membership in 4-H Clubs. Beginning in 1956-57 and continuing through 1959-60 (population projections are not available for dates after July 1, 1960) between 3-1/2 to 4 million boys and girls will reach their tenth birthdays during each 12-month period.

Figure 1 shows the number of children 10 years of age at the time of the Censuses of 1920, 1930, 1940, and 1950 and projections for July 1 of each year, 1952 to 1960. For 1920 to 1950, the approximate distribution

by urban, rural-nonfarm, and rural-farm residence is also shown. (The data can be used only to show very roughly the general trend in the distribution by residence, because of the changes in definitions of the residence classifications.) Both the future increase in the number of persons who are in the youngest age group eligible for membership in 4-H Clubs and the past decrease in the rural-farm proportion of this age group are obvious.

Figure 2 presents similar data for the population 10 to 21 years of age, the total age groups from which 4-H membership is drawn. As the population 10 to 21 years of age contains persons born in a 12-year period, peaks in the birth rate are "smoothed over." However, the upsurge in the birth rate is apparent in the continuous rise from 27 million in 1950 to 36 million in 1960.

Two more points might be mentioned. First, there were about 2 million 4-H Club members in 1950. If all or most of these members lived in rural-farm areas, they represented only 37 percent of the rural-farm population eligible for membership; 3.4 million other persons in the rural-farm population were eligible but were not members. In addition, 21 million persons in the urban and rural-nonfarm population were eligible in 1950.

Second, it is likely that many young persons now in the rural-farm population will become part of the rural-nonfarm or urban population at some time in the future; some undoubtedly have hopes or definite plans for this. A well-rounded program for the 4-H Clubs should include projects that will attract this group and also prepare them for rural-nonfarm or urban living.

POPULATION 10 YEARS OF AGE AND 10 TO 21 YEARS OF AGE,
BY RESIDENCE, FOR THE UNITED STATES,
APRIL 1, 1950

(Population in millions. Based on preliminary data from the
1950 Census of Population published by the Bureau of the Census.)

Residence	10 years old		10 to 21 years old	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	2.3	100	26.5	100
Urban	1.2	53	15.2	58
Rural nonfarm	0.6	26	5.9	22
Rural farm	0.5	21	5.4	20

FIG. 1. POPULATION 10 YEARS OF AGE, FOR THE UNITED STATES, 1920 TO 1960

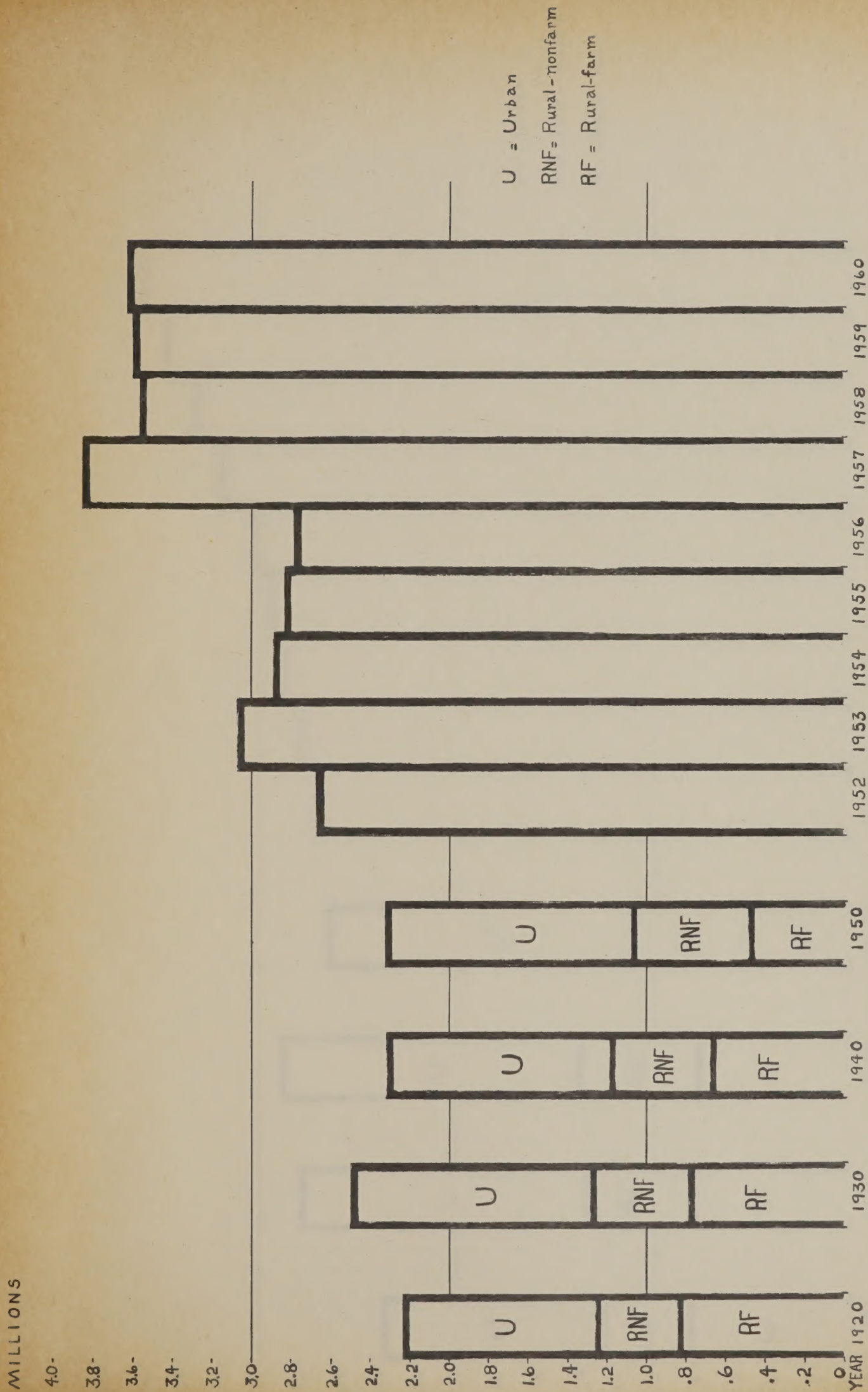


FIG.2..POPULATION 10 To 21 YEARS OF AGE INCLUSIVE, FOR THE UNITED STATES, 1920 To 1960

